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THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE STUDYING RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

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A COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF GRAND RAPIDS TO INVESTIGATE RACIAL BALANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. COMMITTEE FINDINGS SHOWED THAT RACIAL IMBALANCE EXISTED AND HAD INCREASED SINCE 1950. NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES WERE FOUND IN TEACHER QUALITY IN THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS, BUT NONWHITE TEACHERS WERE ASSIGNED PRIMARILY TO SCHOOLS WITH A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF NONWHITE STUDENTS. DIFFERENCES IN FACILITIES DID NOT SEEM TO BE A FUNCTION OF SEGREGATION, AND THE NEED FOR AND AVAILABILITY OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION WERE NOT LIMITED TO NEGRO STUDENTS. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PROMOTING OPEN HOUSING, IN PUBLICIZING THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND STATING ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENDING SCHOOL SEGREGATION, AND IN ADVANCING COMMUNITY EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE REPORT. THE BOARD SHOULD INITIATE SUCH ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AS INTERSCHOOL PROJECTS, REZONING, HUMAN RELATIONS UNITS FOR ALL FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS, AND OPEN ENROLLMENT. IN ADDITION, COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS SHOULD BE "DEVELOPMENTAL" INSTEAD OF "REMEDIAL," PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS SHOULD BE LOWER, AND FREE SUMMER SCHOOLS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS INVOLVE INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES, IMPROVING THE RACIAL BALANCE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL, AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS. (NH)

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THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE STUDYING RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Dr. James Hoffman
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THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE STUDYING RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

On November 1, 1965, a 52 man committee was appointed by the Board of Education of the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to study the effect of de facto segregation in the public school system. The committee members were nominated by individual Board members and were representative of the general citizenry.[1] In addition, four consultants from four state colleges and universities were appointed to consult the committee.[2] This committee was formed in response to a joint letter from the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League, besides the Board's own interest in abiding by recent court decisions.

The Supreme Court has declared de jure segregation harmful and unconstitutional. No Michigan school system is segregated by law, resulting in a de jure segregated system; however, many systems are faced with virtually segregated schools resulting from residency patterns. This is what is referred to as de facto segregation. The constitutionality of de facto segregation has never been before the Supreme Court. Certain state courts have considered this question and although there is a variation in their rulings the trend seems to be that de facto segregation is also considered unconstitutional. A summary of reasons for these courts' actions is stated here:

> From the fact that public education is the state's most important function, it does not necessarily follow that segregated public education, whatever the cause, is illegal. But the importance of public education in a democratic society imperatively requires affirmative action on the part of the state to assure each child

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[1] See Appendix A for committee names.

[2] See Appendix B for consultant names and universities represented.

> his fair share, and a child in a segregated Negro school does not receive his fair share. Public education, once offered by the state, must be made available to all on equal terms. And segregated education, being inherently unequal, is, therefore, unconstitutional.
>
> A racially segregated Negro school is an inferior school. It is inherently unequal. No honest person would even suggest, for example, that the segregated slum school provides educational opportunity equal to that provided by the white suburban public school. Thus, children compelled by compulsory attendance laws to attend the segregated Negro school are deprived of equal protection of the law. The fact that the classification to attend school is based on geography, and not on race, does not necessarily make the school less segregated or less inferior.[3]

A 'fair share' education takes much more into consideration than adequate school facilities, good teachers, and compensatory programs. This statement was made in the original Kansas court decision about de facto segregation:

> To separate them (Negro children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.[4]

Critical attention is being focused on schools, therefore, not because they have caused segregation, but because segregated schools impair the ability of the child to profit from the educational opportunities provided him.

> In this context, the Negro community and its accompanying predominantly Negro schools can more easily be seen as agents which have adverse effects upon self-esteem, value systems, motivations,

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[3]Wright, J. Skelly, "Public School Desegregation: Legal Remedies for De Facto Segregation," Western Law Review, Volume 16, Number 3, May 1965, page 493. Cases cited: Brown V. Board of Education, 1954, and these reapportionment cases: Reynolds V. Sims, 1964; Wesberry V. Sanders, 1964; Gray V. Sanders, 1963; Barksdale V. Springfield School Comm., 1965. (The Court decisions are on permanent file at the Board of Education along with minutes of all meetings. These and all materials are available to any citizen.)

[4]Brown V. Board of Education, Ibid.

> aspirations, and the behavior of pupils. Such adverse effects prevailing in many students can seriously impair the educational processes in a school despite the presence of excellent teachers and adequate facilities.[5]

Rather than wait for a possible Supreme Court ruling many states and communities are exercising leadership in seeking local solutions to this complex problem. Citizens groups throughout the country are, therefore, examining the depths of their community's educational segregation, studying the allied economic effects on property values and labor resources, and realizing the morality involved in the total problem.

The committee was therefore formed[6] and addressed itself to these issues and questions:

1. What is the evidence of de facto segregation in Grand Rapids?

   What is the current situation and what are the trends since 1950 of non-white student enrollments in the elementary and secondary schools in Grand Rapids? Also, what is the current situation and what are the trends since 1950 of the employment and assignment of non-white teachers in Grand Rapids? Is the situation improving or worsening?

2. What is the quality of the elementary and secondary educational program, resources, materials, equipment and building facilities in those schools designated as 'inner-city schools',[7] as compared to other schools?

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[5]Pinderhughes, Dr. C., The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee, Report on Racial Imbalance in Boston Public Schools, January, 1965.

[6]The Board of Education guidelines are listed in Appendix C.

[7]Inner-city elementary schools are: Alexander, Campau, Coit, Coldbrook, Hall, Franklin, Henry, Jefferson, Kensington, Lexington, Madison, Sheldon, Sigsbee, Stocking, Straight and Vandenberg.

3. What is the extent and quality of the compensatory program in Grand Rapids? Are the educational opportunities adequate in this program?
4. And if it is concluded that segregation exists, and is detrimental to a child's education, what is recommended to alleviate the separation?[8]

THE COMMITTEE STUDY PROCEDURE

To gain the background sufficient to make decisions and recommendations, the committee agreed on goals, definitions, working procedures, and a study outline. The committee knew the problem was not an easy one to understand and study as its roots go deep into man's history and the ways he learns to behave. Nevertheless it began the study by looking at the numbers, ratios, trends and graphs that represented the problem. Board administrators furnished detailed information in the form of boundary maps, school locations, non-white percentages, policies, and other facts about the school system.

In addition, the committee was furnished reading materials, such as Crisis in Black and White, by Charles Silberman; an article on the fundamental struggles involved in desegregation by Mr. Francis Keppel, then U.S. Commissioner of Education; De Facto School Segregation, by Arnold Rose; a compilation of materials on the educational effects of segregation by the consultants; along with the Supreme Court decisions, law reviews, and past Board of Education statements relative to segregation. The consultants presented their views individually and in a panel, and Miss June Shagaloff, National Education Director of the N.A.A.C.P., addressed the entire committee.

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[8]The entire study and attack outline is in Appendix D.

Sub-committees were formed to investigate in depth the first three of the four previously stated questions. There were the normal and expected differences of opinion, frustrations, confusion of terms, and needs for clarification. Finally, the study, discussion, visitations, consultant and expert help resulted in the following sub-committee reports, with the last question of separateness left for full committee study and analysis. These careful investigations consumed two months and were reported to the committee as a whole.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RACIAL IMBALANCE[9]

Findings

A. Summary: Racial Imbalance in Pupil Enrollment

1. Racial imbalance exists in the Grand Rapids Public Schools.
2. Racial imbalance has increased significantly since 1950.
   a. There is a larger number of schools with high-percentage non-white enrollment in 1965 than in 1950.
   b. More of these schools have a higher percentage of non-white enrollment in 1965 than they had in 1950.

B. Summary of Teacher Qualifications and Placement

1. When judged by academic degree and experience, there is no significant difference in the quality of the teachers assigned to the different schools in the system.
2. The number of non-white professional employees in the public school system has increased from 2 in 1949 to 88 in 1965.

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[9]Full committee reports are in Appendix E, F, G.

3. Most of the non-white teachers teach in schools which have predominantly non-white pupil enrollments. Thus, in 1965 60 of the 68 non-white classroom teachers who were assigned to specific individual schools were assigned to schools with high percentage non-white enrollments.
4. None of the teachers who responded in writing to this sub-committee indicated a dissatisfaction with current transfer policies.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FACILITIES[10]

Findings

A. Great differences exist in site and size, playground space and equipment, room size, libraries,and equipment among all schools in the city. In one educational resource an inner-city school might fare better than a school not designated as Inner-city, and fare worse in another.

In some areas such as playground acreage and volumes of texts in school libraries there were disadvantages noted in inner-city schools. In other areas such as audio-visual equipment tne inner-city schools had an advantage.

B. No differences were found in the efforts of the Board of Education to maintain the facilities in good repair. All buildings in all sections of the city were exceedingly well maintained.

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[10]Those interested should study this complex report carefully as numerical comparisons were difficult to make; and quantitative assessments were not necessarily qualitative. Note also that the full report discusses those buildings recommended for replacement.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

Findings

1. The compensatory program as offered by the Grand Rapids School system is enthusiastically endorsed.
2. At the same time the committee realizes that the compensatory education program does not take the place of desegregation.
3. It must be noted that of the twelve elementary schools now involved in the compensatory program[11], four of them have over 90% white enrollment; and one has an 88% white enrollment. The remaining seven are 75% or more non-white. Therefore, even though the children in predominately Negro schools were found to need extra help, it is not true that this need is limited to a racial group.
4. Furthermore, it is important to view the entire compensatory program as a continuous process with far-reaching results. As example, we visualize the solution of the dropout problem as one of the far-reaching results.

Each sub-committee also made recommendations regarding its study area. These recommendations are included in the final recommendation section of this report.

Upon the conclusion and adoption of the three sub-committee reports, the entire committee addressed itself to the last question of separation, and, eventually, recommendations to end the separation. These were the most difficult of the committee's tasks.

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[11]As of February, 1966.

They were now considering what constitutes an education and whether segregation is detrimental to that education. Essentially, the members of the committee were asking themselves these questions: Is the informal environment the most effective teacher? Is there a hidden curriculum that cancels out the best of classroom teaching? Do segregated youngsters study and learn the real text of life? Is it significant that the Negro youngster from the impoverished, broken home has no opportunity to see anything different than the helplessness and bitterness reflected in his associates? Does the Negro child from a stable home have opportunity to view the aspirations and ways of behaving of the white student? If there is a loss, does it go two ways? Are the opportunities to associate with and learn from the Negro child lost to the white child, making him just as disadvantaged? Shouldn't they have opportunity to learn each other's values?

As both will inherit the world to live in and run, should both have their characters shaped together to run it well? Just what <u>are</u> the values taught in a truly democratic education?

The entire committee agreed that the effects of segregation are detrimental to the education of all youngsters and to the community as a whole. The premises on which this belief was based were that education was not only academic, but social; not only skill development, but attitude development appropriate to uphold our democratic way of living; that when the children of today reach adulthood they must be able to relate with, believe in, and understand each other; that strife is born of misunderstanding; that racial imbalance promotes dropouts, as the child has a lack of incentive to achieve, and that dropouts economically affect everyone; that a student's set of life's examples must include differences, enabling all students to see the rewards

of a continuing education in other students; and finally, that the racial imbalance in our schools is a completely unfortunate and undesirable situation for children of all races. Therefore, integration must be made an immediate educational objective.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee recognizes that the racial imbalance that exists is a challenge to the Board of Education that has resulted from long established patterns of housing segregation in our city. There are many factors contributing to this situation of segregated housing. Nevertheless, the committee wishes to make this its first recommendation:

1. That the Board of Education exercise leadership in enlisting promotion of open housing as a long-term goal. Specifically, the Board should appeal to every possible source of help, including the city commissions of Grand Rapids and surrounding cities, the Human Relations Commission, the Real Estate Board, the Chamber of Commerce, labor unions, civic clubs, churches, news media, financial institutions, and civil rights groups in an effort to achieve a truly integrated community. And further:
2. That the Board of Education promote the findings of this committee and issue a public statement that de facto segregation does exist and that the Board has a responsibility to do something about it. The objective of integration can be on a long-term basis. The Board of Education should hire a human relations specialist to work with schools, homes, and teachers to implement these recommendations and seek other solutions to racial imbalance.
3. That a Citizens Advisory Committee be appointed to work with the administration and evaluate annually the implementation

of this report, other creative approaches to integration, and acceptable State Board of Education recommendations. This committee should make annual reports to the community regarding integration progress and actions taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATION

Since segregation exists now, the Board of Education must assume active responsibility to correct racial imbalance in our schools and to alleviate the harmful effects of such imbalance on our children by these suggested ways:

4. That the Board of Education institute pilot programs using a variety of new techniques of group interchange and school organization to further integration in one or more public schools. Examples:

   a. Individual schools could exchange classes for particular periods; with students working on pertinent projects together and sharing the results of these inquiries. These exchange programs can be accomplished after principals, teachers, and students decide on projects and correlations. We are asking for 'applying education' with, as example, a 6th grade from Henry School working on a subject such as water pollution with the 6th grade from Hillcrest School. We are indicating the neighborhood school concept can be retained, remedial programs can be retained, and yet transporting of students

for a day per month or three week period can occur with meaningful integration resulting as students work together. In addition, an exchange of cultural programs or unit work between schools is recommended. In addition, camping experiences between schools for brief periods could be explored.

b. High school students could be offered opportunities to exchange for project or cultural work between integrated and segregated schools.

c. Selected school zones could be established to include two or more existing school zones or parts of zones, where feasible, so that integration may be effected in a manner similar to the Princeton Plan.

d. The Board of Education could provide a laboratory school for elementary use where all students of a selected grade (we suggest the 5th) would spend 3 to 4 weeks each year in concentrated study on the humanities and with emphasis on the contribution which people of all ethnic and racial groups have and are making to the progress of American democracy. Transporting the students to such a school would be the responsibility of the Board.

The elementary schools selected for each session should provide for integrated classes and teaching staff. The private and parochial schools of Grand

Rapids and the Boards of Education in the adjoining communities are to be invited to join in this project.

5. That the Board of Education adopt a policy of open enrollment to accomplish integration where adequate facilities are available, qualified as follows:
   a. The Board annually publish the list of open schools.
   b. Once enrolled, a student be allowed to remain in this school until his education is completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPENSATORY PROGRAMS

Although the quality of education in Grand Rapids schools for all children appears the same, not all children arrive at school age level with equal pre-school training or from an equal cultural environment. Therefore, there is need for an expanded compensatory education program for the upgrading of both non-white and white children in culturally deprived areas. The program can be expanded and improved in these specific ways:

6. That compensatory education should be approached as 'developmental education' and not as remedial education alone. Specific recommendations are:
   a. That pre-school programs be evaluated for effectiveness and possibly expanded, with voluntary assistance being used for transporting children in open-enrollment fashion.
   b. That extra emphasis should be placed on reading in grades one and two since reading is fundamental and the 'key' to good education.

c. That remedial reading programs should begin at grade two when necessary.

d. That the compensatory program should be expanded through the junior and senior high schools, if possible.

7. That even lower pupil-teacher ratios than is currently practiced be implemented in inner-city schools. The Board of Education in Grand Rapids could consider hiring one additional teacher for each two rooms of first through sixth grades, in which a majority of children are judged to be achieving significantly below their grade level.

8. That free summer schools be established to provide the widest possible curriculum offerings to the broadest range of interested students.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL BOUNDARIES AND FACILITIES

This committee endorses the Board's objective of removing the junior high schools from South, Ottawa, and Central High Schools. In addition we recommend:

9. That central campus school situations be explored firmly by the Board and administrators.

10. That the Board of Education restudy the possibility of realignment of elementary school district feeder patterns to junior and senior high schools for a better racial balance in our schools.

11. That the Board of Education select future sites for junior and senior high schools that take into consideration the housing

and student population patterns so that a greater balance of races be accomplished wherever practical.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee endorses the non-graded developmental approach now being implemented in the inner-city schools that recognizes differences in pupil achievement and recommends it be expanded as soon as feasible to all elementary grade levels. In addition, we recommend:

12. That courses be introduced at all grade levels which have as their purpose the development of better understanding between races and the study of ethnic contributions of all groups.
13. That textbooks and materials that promote better human relations be studied for expanded instructional use.
14. That a broad program of family life education be introduced throughout the system.
15. That greater emphasis be given to counseling and guidance in high schools, and that counselors be given special training in the fields of human relations and in the particular needs and special problems of children of each race.
16. That the intrinsic values of the new dimensions of vocational education be given increased emphasis in the curriculum in the inner-city schools. The Board should:
    a. Expand facilities when necessary.
    b. Emphasize the status and importance of vocational

education so that the program does not become a 'catch all' for behavioral problems.

17. That the co-op work-study program be analyzed to see if more socially disadvantaged students could be included.
18. That a diagnostic clinic be formed with specialists in the fields of mental, physical, and emotional problems to diagnose more readily a student's problem. The student would then be referred for treatment. In addition, visiting teacher services and psychologist's services should be increased in all schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING TEACHERS AND SUPERVISORS

The committee would like to make these general recommendations realizing they could eventually be affected by negotiation:

19. That a greater proportion of non-white teachers be placed in schools of predominantly white enrollment.
20. That multi-racial teaching experience be considered a desirable qualification in selecting personnel for administrative positions.
21. That the administration seek greater integration in its supervisory staff with the purpose of achieving an integrated staff being given consideration in the assignment and reassignment of professional personnel.
22. That efforts be made to place more male principals in the inner-city schools.

23. That teachers in the inner-city schools be urged to make regular home visitations and be given released time and/or additional compensation for this or other extraordinary duties.
24. That emphasis be placed on in-service workshops for teachers directed to the better understanding of racial, religious, and ethnic differences. These workshops should include personnel from both inner and outer city schools.
25. That more male teachers be employed and placed in inner-city schools.
26. That the present teacher-transfer policy be changed to include Board initiated transfers for the purpose of reducing racial imbalance in the present assignment of teachers, when mutually agreeable.

PARENT AND PARENT EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent involvement in a child's school program plays a vital part in that child's education. Therefore, it is recommended:

27. That encouragement should be given to PTA's to provide initiative for parents, teachers, and others to share bi-racial experiences and projects.
28. That the Community School concept be intensively studied for application in this community. If schools are used for parent education after regular school hours, greater economic values will accrue for the entire community. Adult education of a remedial or basic nature, therefore, will both improve home environments and increase employment potential.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

As Grand Rapids is tied to other communities and institutions we recommend:

29. That the Board of Education invite neighboring school districts to 'join in' on seeking a solution for this problem of de facto segregation.

30. That the Board of Education seek financial and professional assistance in the implementation of any pilot programs and seek support and cooperation of adjacent communities in these pilot programs of the central city.

31. That the school system continue its close cooperation with colleges and universities in planning effective student teaching and internship programs in deprived areas.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The committee concludes with this statement from the recently adopted guidelines concerning educational opportunity for all children presented to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction:

> The schools of this country represent America's hope and plan for a better society. The public school -- open to all, regardless of race, economic status, or creed -- was and is a basic institution through which Americans are to be prepared for cultural, economic, and political participation in our community.
>
> America has asserted from the start that our democratic goals cannot merely be expressed through written documents or verbal pronouncements. We recognized very early that personal associations are important for the realization of these goals. Thus: American education, through the public schools, must provide the opportunity for all children of various ethnic, racial, religious, and economic backgrounds to meet, learn and work together.[12]

This representative citizens' committee feels these recommendations will benefit the entire community. Constitutional attention is now rightly focused on education and its aspects of equality, but the committee feels rulings of law do not necessarily alter group or personal attitudes. So it urges citizens to realize that none of the recommendations can be effective if they do not examine their own attitudes toward race. Attitudes are formed by home influence, teacher leadership, and classroom tensions; and so the human problem of segregation can only be overcome with powerful mobilization of the forces for good in this community. All people of this community need to demonstrate brotherhood with its respect for all religions, race, and constitutional law and to understand we are tied economically and morally to each other.

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[12]"Suggested Guidelines for Providing for the Maximum Education of Children of all Races and Creeds in Michigan," A Report to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, from the State Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity. Publication Number 541, 1964.